

**Agricultural Advisory Committee
February 2, 2012
7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Canada Room**

Members Present: Regional Councillor Gord Landon, Chair Councillor Don Hamilton Christopher Burkholder Ruth Brock Kim Empringham Guy Farintosh Harriet Friedmann Bryan Hulshaf Jay Reesor Lynne Koss Paul Reesor Richard Reesor Agency Representatives: Carolyn Woodland, TRCA Jason Ezer, York Region Guests: Gary Wilkins, TRCA Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health Joan Stonehocker, York Region Food Network	Staff Present: Lilli Duoba, Senior Project Coordinator Elizabeth Wimmer, Senior Environmental Planner Laura Gold, Council/Committee Coordinator Regrets: Maria Gatti, Transport Canada Alan Wells, Rouge Park Katie Burns, Sustainability Coordinator
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The Agricultural Advisory Committee convened at 7:31 p.m. with Regional Councillor Gord Landon presiding as Chair.

**1. REVIEW OF THE DECEMBER 1, 2011 AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Moved by Kim Empringham
Seconded by Paul Reesor

That the December 1, 2011 Agricultural Advisory Committee Minutes be adopted as presented.

CARRIED.

2. FOOD CHARTER PRESENTATION

Ms. Lynne Koss, Seeds for Change, Candice Einstoss, York Region Public Health, and Joan Stonehocker, York Region Food Network, provided a presentation entitled “Food for Change”. The presentation included: information on the York Region Food Charter Working Group; an overview of what a food charter is and why we need one; examples of food charters from other cities; the elements of a food charter; background information on why York Region would like to establish a food charter; and information on where we are now with respect to the establishment of a food charter. The presenters asked for advice on how to coordinate food policies for York Region, noting they would like to have a Food Policy Council for York Region.

Discussion:

A Member advised that many Markham residents are looking to purchase organic food, but do not know where to buy it. It was reported that Seeds for Change grows and sells organic food. Currently, it has two (2) community gardens and will have (3) more community gardens next year. It was reported that the establishment of a food charter for York Region will help promote this type of information.

The presenters advised that this Committee will be consulted regarding the creation of a food charter for York Region. It was noted that the charter will be a living document.

The Committee discussed what local food is and where it is grown. A question was raised regarding the definition of local? (Is local grown in Markham, York Region, Ontario or North America?). No specific definition was provided. The presenters advised that there are many different definitions of what local food means, noting that this is the type of feedback that is required to establish a food charter for York Region.

A Member noted that it is important to ensure that local organic food is healthier, rather than perceived to be healthier, before moving forward with the establishment of a food charter. It was questioned how the establishment of a York Region food charter supports local farmers. As some Members felt it could create barriers for local farmers.

3. TORONTO REGION AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITY UPDATE

Gary Wilkins, Toronto Conservation Authority (TRCA), provided a presentation entitled “Making Space for Agriculture”. The presentations included an overview of the TRCA and its agricultural history; the turning points for agriculture; information on the Sustainable Near-Urban Agriculture Policy; and the TRCA near-urban agricultural initiatives.

Discussion

A Member questioned why the TRCA removed agriculture use from the Bruce Mill Conservation Area. Mr. Wilkin advised he would email his response to the Committee.

There was an inquiry regarding whether the TRCA partners with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association. It was confirmed that the TRCA has partnered with this organization in the past.

4. DISCUSSION ON AMENDING THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

There was a brief discussion with respect to the composition of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Staff recommended that the Committee revise its Terms of Reference to acknowledge the agency members as voting members. The Committee recommended that the number of members representing the Town's agricultural sector be increased from up to five (5), to up to seven (7), to reflect the current composition of the Committee.

Moved by Councillor Don Hamilton

Seconded by Richard Reesor

That the revised Agricultural Advisory Committee Terms of Reference be approved to acknowledge the agency members as voting members as presented in Appendix A.

CARRIED.

5. BRAINSTORMING FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Committee brainstormed for future agenda items. The following ideas were discussed:

- 1) Mentoring program for new farmers
- 2) Investigating ways to support local farmers to process food (including canning)
- 3) Creating a tour of Markham's/York Region's farmland
- 4) Looking at Markham's Farmers Markets
- 5) Looking at having a smaller version of the Saint Lawrence Market in Markham

Other ideas provided by email included:

- 1) Official Plan review focusing on rural and agricultural impacts/changes
- 2) Developing a "Share the Road" signage program
- 3) Discuss with the Roads Dept. the importance of regular roadside ditch clean out to maintain properly working field tiles and prevent salty water from flooding back onto farmland.
- 4) Wider road shoulders and the use of graduated curbs instead of vertical curbs to allow for safe movement of farm machinery on the roads.
- 5) Weed control along road property, private property and Rouge Park reforested areas.

- 6) Minimum Distance Separation Buffers on development side of built boundary to prevent restrictions on farm use caused by the new development.
- 7) Local Food Promotion and agriculture education
- 8) Tree by-law review
- 9) Local Food Procurement Policy review
- 10) Assist with Food Charter development
- 11) Community Garden support
- 12) Wildlife crop damage and possible solutions to control number of animals

It was recommended that Sustain Ontario be invited to a future meeting.

6. FARMLAND PRESERVATION NEWS

It was reported that the Farmland Preservation News was attached for information purposes.

Ms. Kim Empringham advised that she will be attending the 2012 Farmland Preservation Forum, advising that it is a good forum for discussing what you can do in your own community.

7. NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Committee will be held on March 1, 2012 in the Council Chamber. The Rouge Park Alliance will be providing an update on the Park at the meeting.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business reported.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The Agricultural Advisory Committee adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Action Item	Meeting Date	Responsibility of Staff/Committee Member	Meeting Date to be Completed By	Status
Invite York Region Public Health as an "observer" to future meetings.	Dec. 1, 2011	Katie Burns	March Meeting	
Create a glossary of key terminology to ensure that everyone has the same	Dec. 1, 2011	Lilli Douba & Elizabeth Wimmer	To be included in draft Official Plan	

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understanding of the subject matter				
Invite Sustain Ontario to a Future Meeting	Feb. 2, 2012	Lilli Douba & Elizabeth Wimmer	April Meeting	
Bring Revised Terms of Reference to Council for Approval	Feb. 2, 2012	Laura Gold	March Meeting	